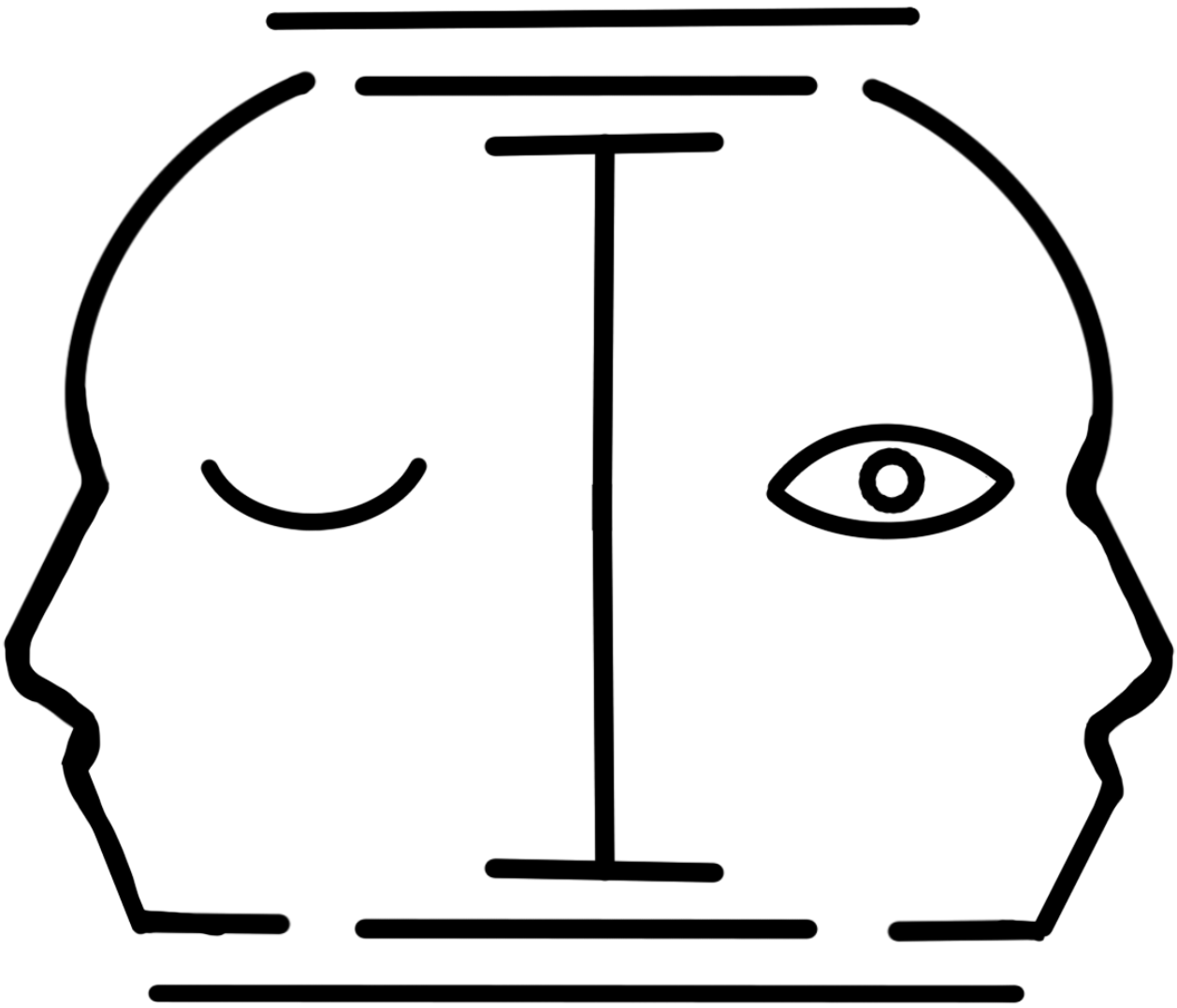

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A Poetry Journal

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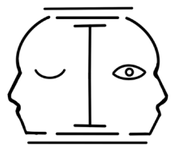

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Impostor syndrome: the belief that talents and accomplishments are fraudulent or the result of luck.

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From the Editors

Welcome to Issue 3! Its theme is "piecemeal," defined as "done, made, or accomplished piece by piece or in a fragmentary way." The poems featured explore this theme through the varied perspectives of 14 poets whose work we are honored to host, and we're especially thrilled to feature several poets who have never before been published. We thank our contributors for sharing their work, and we thank you, readers, for your support of Impostor and your belief in the importance of poetry.

—L.M. and Coral

Our Mission

Impostor syndrome: the belief that talents and accomplishments are fraudulent or the result of luck.

Perhaps you've experienced it yourself—the editors certainly have. The literary world is rife with lofty and exclusionary definitions of what qualifies the title of "writer." When we decided to create this journal, we knew that first and foremost, we wanted to create a welcoming and encouraging space for writers who may feel intimidated by the established literary world or who feel as if their credentials—or lack thereof—don't fall in line with what's expected. We want you to submit regardless of your history. Age, academic background, or the length of your curriculum vitae hold no influence on our view of what constitutes a poet. Visit our website for more information on how to submit your work. Your voice matters, and we want to hear it!

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A Silent Study of Tired Things
by Justin Aoba

I watch them migrate across your convex mirror,
dark silhouettes behind frosted glass that tell
a story of a lock, a hardened thing
submerged under its own skin,
filled with ventricles of pins,
tumblers, and the curdled remains of daylight.

A story changes from
your worn hands to mine, still smelling
of ginger and sea salt.
It is wet with truths that evaporate
too quickly, like when you said
things will go on.
I did not believe you. I
try to spool out what I mean, what
I mean to mean, but it comes out
like crowded teeth.

I spend my hours searching
for polyester hopes in
silent places. I'm told
truth is hard and clear like acrylic.
It lives amongst the wreckage
of an old hungry dream
so we can read the stenciled texture of the self.
The confessional ballasted by
scar tissue. Will I turn to speak?

You smile, the corners of your mouth an apology.

My words graze idly
in the stillness of my hands and I try
to think of that story, the way it lingers in folds of skin,
the acrid smell of burnt-out love,
my mother's voice
enunciating its lived-in truth, *to just hold on*,
but it recedes into the haze of an old mirror
where even the shape of its absence is lost.

Daddy Issues
by Antastasia DiFonzo

I. Father to Mother

[redacted] she [redacted] had [redacted] nipples [redacted] they [redacted] would destroy our relationship. [redacted] she wanted to be kissed [redacted] This [redacted] destroyed our relationship. [redacted]

II. Daughter to Father

[redacted] you [redacted] destroyed our relationship. [redacted] pay [redacted]

III. Father to Daughter

an imagined future

I'm sorry [redacted]

Maybe Someday
by James Farrow

I cannot
conceive an answer
to all the questions
asked

in sincerity,
in doubt,
Is it enough
just waiting here.

for you

and then
the moment comes

to send my thoughts
careening
from this tenuous divide
beyond the edge of reason

yet here
and now

think i'll wait
for but a moment longer

if that's ok
with you

#Blessed
by Lauren Fountain

Every Christmas I go back to my grandfather's house,
Where the smell of biscuits drenches the room,
And Paula Deen cookbooks are visible to the overlooking eye.
It's a Christmas tradition for my family
To gather around the fire—
In spite of the fire—
For me to dress as Mary,
Wrapped in white cloth and covered with a blue shawl,
To retell the story we all know
And all believe in
Wholeheartedly.
Do I still resemble Mary? Or is this just tradition?
I wonder now if He intended every verse to be a virtue.
Do you actually love thy neighbor
If you don't believe that they should love each other?
Does that mean I'm not a follower
If I don't follow blindly?
I remember sitting at awkward middle school lunches,
Surrounded by the clamor of ignorance and egocentrism,
And all I could hear was the *clink clank* of my fork hitting my bowl.
My best friend at the time
Ripped the cross off my neck
Because she said I should be more like her
And less like me.
I always wished I would become more like my friends
Or my family, for that matter.
Spend too much time with one,
And suddenly, the seesaw tips—
Detaches from the fulcrum.
I head to my grandfather's pool,

And I tip my head back,
Keeping it underwater for
Ten, fifteen, twenty seconds.
Plunge, paddle, bathe, crawl.
I wonder:
If I don't dive into either pool,
Do I even know how to swim?

What We Teach

by Lucia Herrmann

In my English class,
a student is not allowed
to say:

"I think things are pretty self-explanatory."

We are talking about the ocean
and swimming as a sense of freedom.

Let's start
on how
there's a different sentido
on whether you say
sea,
ocean,
or la mer because you see, you
flip a and e, French to
Spanish *el mar*
and the body of water
becomes a masculine
you enter
and the moon, still
a goddess.

Then we can think
on how
what you are peacefully
treading, squiggling shape
sweet release
of bodily tension,

being held
by something you will
never be bigger than,
can also swell,
bulldoze
impact, like slamming flat
on concrete
destroyer of towns, forest,
catalyst of mass migrations.

To swim is fully
submerged vantage
of loved land, home
to all you've ever known,
a steady beneath
quite possibly
people there too,
unmasked (because outside)
and in permanent
chaise-lounge repose,
moments of pure unseam,
congenial congregation.

Because to swim is to bre - athe into voice
rumbles, sonorous
murmurs with every answer—
tongue of Oshun
laps reverb, and just whispers
constant speaking seeking
inward and in, in.

In this light, everything is undertone green
and whereas up north,

the color scheme is
a covered-up grey—foggy, mist, stone—

the green of beach
is searing, condensation, humidity

legs itching from seeing so much sun
and that is freedom.

Four Pictures
by Ben Horrobin

Shortly following birth
To age ten or eleven
His father behind the camera
Domestic scenes
In the kitchen of the blue bungalow
On the couch, faded velvet
In wraparound shades, cradling an oversized empty
The height of comedy

Age twelve to fifteen
Gawky
In jeans and a t-shirt in the 104° summer
What could be Belgium or France
Background a Zoetrope of various pastoral scenes
Intercut with ancient cities

Age sixteen to twenty-three
There is a blank spot here
An interlude of several years
From which we have only one photo
Taken by an unknown acquaintance
With one of those briefly trendy revivalist Polaroids
He stands eyes to some unseen horizon
Cigarette held just outside the frame
Not yet the inheritor of broad shoulders
A city which could be Toronto or New York
Absent defining landmarks

Age twenty-four to present
Re-emerged in galleries
Behind the lens mostly
Fit and cleaner cut
Passionate
Haunted

Atmospherics After Dark
by Peter J. King

In the early hours of morning,
with the volume turned down low,
if John Peel's Night Ride wasn't on
I'd search out pirate radio.

The needle roved across the globe:
Hilversum to Gothenburg,
Ulm to Horby, Prague to Droitwich,
Belgrade, Rome, and Luxembourg.

In the darkness of my bedroom,
lit by just the dial's dim gleam,
ghosts of voices from the past
and future flickered like a dream.

The airwaves seethed
with clicks and whistles,
hisses, crackles,
hums, and fizzles.

Then at last I'd hit a station,
more by chance than by design;
maybe just the news in Swedish —
with good fortune, Caroline!

Hours I spent with Floyd and Beefheart,
Tull, St John, Blood Sweat and Tears;
when nostalgia drags me back, it's
atmospherics that I hear.

//golden hour\\
by Sherice Kong

5 p.m. drive i didn't have my license but neither did you
even though you're almost 18, and i was only 16.
where can you find some place open at this hour?
i said: "everywhere." because it's the damned truth.
you and i,
we have the whole world
under our thumbs, give me the controller for just one second.
over there, that's the broken streetlight that lillian crashed into
last may because she was in love with life (drunk).
can you see?
under the grove the fireflies are dancing profusely
like the way your cheeks fill with red when i said you were handsome.
the clouds (and i) watch you with undying love
faintly brushed like the gods' fulgent prodigy
(of course, neither of us believe in god or gods).
no where else still sells coke for just fifty cents and a smile.
golden hour is almost over, it feels like forever, but i knew it was just
a second since you've been soaked through with halcyon shadows:

because no one ever tells you that golden hour is just a mask for the bloodlusted demons,
and he was the only devil to ever court me before he hurt me.

Tea Cups
by Nick Lattanze

Like all the days before,
painting patterns
on your sheets.
I could not bear to hear your voice,
porcelain roses at your feet.
It all came dashed to pieces
swaddled & unborn.
Like the birds upon the mountains,
separate from the storm.
No words, no sounds
between us
yet a voice still sings out.
May those words spill out of my mouth.
Again and again.
It's just a tea cup after all.

A Telephone and a Tommy Gun
by Kaci Skiles Laws

Banana—

Skipping across the cover of a card sent
to the hospital where you're getting diagnosed.
It's supposed to be funny. Your laugh
is a running cockroach.

The only thing you choke down everyday during
and after dye testing. A colonoscopy. X-rays.
Sleeping Beauty. No cure. Concern.

At least it's not cancer.
You will always remember who said that.
Her rejoicing. Jealous hums.
Made invalid by emotional invalids.

The way people look at you
when you say Crohn's; you start saying—
Chronic—not -cles of Narnia. Not Mary Jane.
Auto-immune. Inflammation from mouth to anus.

Listening to everyone talk over you
as you explain. Heart palpitations. Low potassium.
Kiwis you inform. Kiwis have more.

No one hears. Everyone wants to insist
on something to help. *A bother.* Another test.

On bedrest and in your pregnant hair.
Giving birth to silk skin,

yellow three months in after vaccines.
A vague connect-a-dot. *You forgot.* Used pen.
Jaundice is a symptom.

Being obedient is a condition.
You know four shots is *bananas*—

What they call your questions.
Discreet and fervorous breastfeeding.
A feeling as if it's your fault;
you're the least common denominator.
X-factor. Fraction.

You know you don't have Hepatitis B.
You know, *no*—will get you eye rolls.

The first solid food he eats, messy
petal fingers playing in pale mush.
His breath.

At home going bad in the too humid air,
becoming an idea for bread
that you'll never execute. You tried.
Too tired.

The way you feel your decline as months
peel, as you bruise easier and slink
toward the kitchen floor. *Think*.

What you call your mother-in-law.
What she calls you. A catch-22. A telephone
and a tommy gun. She's an expert level
gaslighter. Triangulator.
Crazy-maker.

No one believes you. No one believes *in you*.
You drink the quiet fire. Ostracized.
Strange. Satisfied.

Always moody like an Andy Warhol painting.
Wanting to be less abstract. More distracted.
Less stretch and brown lines.
God's discarded art.

See everyone passing as you become a slug. Hang on
for long days and short years. After each
emergency room stay.
After everyone forgets you had a baby.

no rhyme or reason
by Dane Lyn

(after George Condo's "The Age of Reason")

fragments of architecture
a person.
fragments of people
a building.
macabre tinny music blares
from big top tent pools
pendulums of trapeze artists
in a vermillion-tinged sky.
disassembled
distorted
torturing and tortured
soup of eyes, breasts, clenched hands and smiles.
frenzied chaos.
fragments of color
the age of reason.
fragments of reason
a work of art.

Wisdom Teeth
by Josh McCune

for Peter

An image of *The Potato Eaters*
we hunched over steaming bowls,
awash in the glow of our efforts,
stirring root vegetables and
crunching on salt. Listening

To the slow tick of the clock,
to the soft brush of socks,
to the gentle wailing of the sea.
Neither of us understands
why the broth tastes of mussels.

*

My wisdom teeth are coming through
and I feel inclined to say something wise.

Something like "What art needs is an acceptance
of what's muddled and confused in us.

What's broken by our lives and by living."
But that's not what I said.

*

I leaf through a furiously annotated copy
of Eliot's *Selected Poems*. As expected,
The Waste Land got it worst.
You tell me your uncle was an English teacher
who drank himself to death.

In *Ars Poetica* Horace refers to
the death of Empedocles,
who threw himself into a volcano,
and admits poets the right
to destroy themselves.

When I first read *The Waste Land*
I wanted to throw myself into a volcano.

*

My wisdom teeth form as
new pearls in the diadem
of my jaw. Quite soon

Our conversation reveals
that four chin hairs between us
do not equate to wisdom's beard.

Outside the sea continues her song
while our un-tuned ears wait
for Revelation.

I strain to read the riddles of the sand –
letters on the shore's cerebrum.

I am the goddess in this temple

by Ismim Putera

I am the goddess in this temple
you come to this isolated
corner to worship
my ethereal body
my skin is a mixture
of gold and copper
my lips are as sweet
as morning lotus
I might have heard your prayer—
those verses flow
like river out of your monklike
mouth
I am the fish that swims
beneath your pious
tongue

The Departed Wayfarer
by Jared Wong

Let's become chaotic orchard harvesters and live out
in the woods by the pier. On weekends,
claim we'll attend a Richmond Night Market while
on a road trip with strangers.

Follow in the footsteps of the wayfarer
who did not pass this way again.

He didn't come back
to fill out a census or rub his back
against graffiti along the Styx.

From the air, his voice crossed the Maginot
Lines of country while proclaiming:

We are all lip readers falling asleep on white checkered sheets, dreaming about tea parties and jackrabbits. Wearing socks with the faces of foxes to ballroom dinners in honour of long walks in the arctic that haven't happened yet.

Now he lives between constrained space and sunsets. In
language spent roaming translation, sentences
that find their way back home or to a hostel. For a rest.

Then departure.

Contributors

Justin Aoba lives and writes in New York City.

Anastasia DiFonzo (she/her) is a San Diego based poet with a cat named Klaus. Her work can be found or is forthcoming in *Anti-Heroin Chic*, Gnashing Teeth Publishing, *Sledgehammer Lit*, *Punk Noir Magazine*, *Kalopsia Lit*, *Yasou!*, *Salt & Citrus*, *Tempered Runes Press*, *Button Eye Review*, *Serotonin Poetry*, and *Drunk Monkeys*. She is on Instagram at @anastasia.difonzo and Twitter at @anmidaludi.

James Farrow is a 22-year-old University student studying liberal arts in Sydney Australia, with a focus on Modern History and Politics. His interests involve reading left-wing political theory, activism, and gaming. James has run a D&D group weekly since high school and from that has found a love of descriptive and emotive language.

Lauren Fountain has lived in numerous places around the world: namely, Atlanta, Houston, Singapore, and Pennsylvania. Often, her writing is a product of the conflicting and complementing ideals, values, and cultures of the experiences she has had. She is a student at Lehigh University, studying industrial engineering and finance. Her writing has been published in the anthology *Up to No Good: A Chorus of Villainous Voices*, and she is the co-founder and co-editor of *Intangible Magazine*.

Lucia Herrmann is a cubanita of the yuma kind. Miami-raised and Philly-based, she writes, performs, and collaborates on all kinds of creative projects. She was featured in two 2019 Philly FringeArts productions, has been published in print and online, and is a former poetry editor for *Toho Journal*. She graduated from Haverford College in 2017 with a degree in English and focus

in Latinx Lit. As an artist-educator, she is dedicated to teaching, empowering, and uplifting individuals and communities through decolonized and anti-racist pedagogy and practice. Visit her website luciaherrmann.com to learn more.

Ben Horrobin was born at the tender age of zero in Vancouver, BC. He can be found on Instagram @Kudzureclaimsthesouth.

Peter J. King was born and brought up in Boston, Lincolnshire. Active on the London poetry scene in the 1970s as writer, performer, publisher, and editor, he returned to poetry in 2013 after a long absence, and has since been widely published in magazines and anthologies. He also translates poetry, mainly from modern Greek (with Andrea Christofidou) and German, writes short prose, and paints. His currently available collections are *Adding Colours to the Chameleon* (Wisdom's Bottom Press) and *All What Larkin* (Albion Beatnik Press).

Sherice Kong is a 15-year-old writer from New Jersey. When she's not writing poetry or fiction at 1 a.m., you can find her listening to Audrey Nuna or attempting to solve a mechanics problem. Find her on Instagram @reiceicey.

Nick Lattanze is a poet from Audubon, PA.

Kaci Skiles Laws is a closet cat-lady and creative writer who reads and writes voraciously in the quiet moments between motherhood and managing Crohn's Disease. She grew up on a small farm in a Texas town alongside many furry friends, two sisters, and a brother. She has known tragic loss too well, and her writing, which is often dark and honest, is a reflection of the shadows lurking in her psyche. Her work can be viewed at kaciskileslawswriter.wordpress.com.

Dane Lyn is an educator, poet, and glitter enthusiast with an MFA from Lindenwood University. Find them in Southern California ridding their shoes of sand, loving their partner, playing music too loud, constructing blanket forts, and caring for their menagerie of teens, snakes, lizards, dogs, rabbits, and cats. Dane's work can be seen in *Gnashing Teeth*, *Closed Eye Open*, *Anti-Heroin Chic* and *Nymph Publication*, links to which are all at DaneLyn.net. They tweet from @PunkHippyPoet.

Josh McCune is a writer from Belfast, Northern Ireland. He holds an BA in English and Philosophy from QUB and an MSC in Literature & Modernity from the University of Edinburgh. His influences include (but are in no way limited to) Frank Ormsby, Michael Longley, Gail McConnell, Wallace Stevens, Edwin Morgan, and Mary Ruefle. He is almost entirely edible and loves a good pair of trousers. This is his first publication.

Ismim Putera (he/him) is a poet and writer from Sarawak, Malaysian Borneo. He is the author of a poetry chapbook *Tide of Time* (Mug and Paper Publishing, 2021), and recently won third place in 7th Singapore Poetry Contest. His latest work can be found in *Anak Sastra*, *Prismatica Magazine* and *Be Me: LGBTQ+ Stories of Belongings*.

Jared Wong (he/him) is a graduate of Mount Allison University (BA) and Carleton University (MA), and briefly worked as a staffer in Canada's Parliament. You can find him on Twitter @Jared_CGW or in Whitehorse, Yukon contemplating the highway and winter. His poetry has appeared in multiple issues of *7Mondays* and *Bywords*, and in *Horse Egg Literary*.

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